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AUTHOR Harris, Louis
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ABSTRACT

Concerns of the academic and business communities regarding science and technology in the United States are addressed. The Harris Poll found that there are signs that American people are viewing science as a more positive force than ever before. A majority is convinced that even if it brings no immediate benefits, scientific research, which advances the frontiers of knowledge, is a necessary human endeavor worth supporting. A plurality of the public agree that colleges and universities have fallen far behind in their ability to conduct basic scientific research and to properly train young scientists and engineers. As for the scientific reputation of universities, 12 percent of the public felt the federal government had the most creative atmosphere for scientific research, 22 percent said industry, 27 percent mentioned foundations, and 41 percent singled out universities. It is suggested that a poor job has been done in arousing and awakening the American people or the Congress to the urgency of restoring the basic teaching and research capability in science and engineering on college campuses. It is proposed that business become heavily involved in upgrading universities' capacity to teach and conduct basic research. On the other hand, universities need to reconstruct their research and teaching capability in science and engineering. Perspectives on the economy and the public's perspectives regarding business are also considered. (SW)

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# CORPORATE, CAMPUS AGENDA: RESTORING PUBLIC CONFIDENCE

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Louis Harris

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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*An address by*

**Louis Harris**

Chairman and Chief Executive Officer

Louis Harris and Associates, Inc.

*Before the*

Business-Higher

Education Forum

Business-Higher
Education Forum
One Dupont Circle, Suite 800
Washington, D.C. 20036
(202) 833-4716

in affiliation with the American Council on Education

We live in a strange and cruel world, full of anomalies, contradictions, and expectations that don't quite work out. For example, I feel quite certain that in the next few days most of the Forum members here from the academic world will be exhorting your business colleagues to focus, please, on the serious brain drain that is taking place in the teaching ranks of our universities. Patently, you will and, indeed, should argue that you cannot attract top young scientists and engineers to your faculties, let alone remain there, when their pay will not even half their starting salaries in industry. No doubt, you will also be addressing the fact that roughly half of your students in these disciplines come from abroad. And now, in all its wisdom, the Congress may be about to pass legislation that will send all the foreign students back whence they came for at least two years.

Also, you from the academic community undoubtedly will want to urge your business counterparts to please loosen their purse strings to restore the nearly shattered basic research capabilities at our universities. At the same time, I'm sure you would like to see the business establishment reverse itself in its unstinting support for drastic cuts in at least some parts of federal spending—especially those dealing with aid to higher education. I am sure you would like them to make an exception in urging the Reagan Administration to restore the disastrous cuts in federal funding of science and technology that have taken place over the past twelve years.

And although you might not say it, I suspect you would like to see business leaders help rescue the student loan program that is getting chopped up in Washington these days. It will gladden your hearts to know that, as of two days

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ago, June 23, by 57–37 percent, a clear majority of the American people favor restoring the cut made last year in grant aid to disadvantaged students.

By the same token, you leaders of business must feel some unease at being greeted at every move with upward-turned palms from all parts of the nonprofit world to bail them out as federal funds dry up. After all, I'm sure you must be thinking, despite all the tax incentives in faster depreciation allowances, safe harbor leasing windfalls, slackening of regulation in Washington, your bottom line is that the bottom line is in pretty bad shape these days. I suspect you are also beginning to wonder what kind of a monkey has the president put on your back when he said the private sector must now pick up the slack resulting from a smaller federal presence.

Let me parenthetically tell you businessmen what the great unwashed American people have in mind for you to do these days. A big 72 percent think business should help the beset elderly, poor, and handicapped, though only 25 percent think you will; 74 percent think you should provide jobs for the unemployed, but only 32 percent think you will; closer to home at this gathering, 73 percent think business should

support scientific research in universities, but only 47 percent think you will; and 70 percent think you should provide college scholarships for worthy students, but no more than 40 percent think you will. The marks accorded you for your current efforts in these good works are 69–27 percent negative. Little did you realize when you helped elect Ronald Reagan in 1980 that, in addition to saving the faltering economy, you would also be cast in the role of social missionaries or at least modern, industrial do-gooders.

*. . . you are getting some real praise from Wall Street these days for your frugal ways in this time of recession.*

While bringing such pleasant tidings, allow me to share with you yet another source of worries you should have. You are getting some real praise from Wall Street these days for your frugal ways in this time of recession. You have been trimming inventories, cutting back on costs, paring your operations to the bone. You are patiently waiting for Wall Street, in turn, to show its faith in the system by unlocking all those billions they manage in pension funds that you have paid for dearly through the years, which in turn will impress Paul Volcker to allow interest rates to ease. And then you will unlease private sector power in capital investment, which will be applied to massive infusions of new high technology and modernization of plants. And this combination, when mixed with union give-back and an easing of stultifying work rules, will inevitably turn around productivity. And, then, we will all be hell-bent on a resurgence of the golden age of American capitalism.

I began this fourth week of June by cavorting with the Wall Street money-manager types,

who run about $180 billion of pension money. Put bluntly, they think Congress is falling on its face in attempting to put the federal budget in order. They expect brother Volcker to get tougher than ever—and he assured me personally on Wednesday he would. And they will continue to put their funds in treasury bills and other federal tender as the Treasury goes to market for an estimated $4–5 billion a week for about twelve to fifteen weeks, beginning in August. The Wall-Streeters do not expect you to be going to market with big new issues to fuel a major capital recovery, albeit they expect you to go more extensively into new shelf issues and to continue to use the safe harbor tax benefits—at least until Congress, as seems likely, abolishes them in a grand gesture to the voters before election day.

In the meantime, those voters, the American people, are growing restless out there about the high hopes they have had for business these past few years. Make no mistake about it, majorities of 70 percent and more wanted, in 1980 and 1981, to see you get government off your back. And by paying lower taxes and having real incentives to have to borrow the capital, they wanted to see you go to a new mode of high technology, and turn around productivity.

But, they are now saying, how long, how long do we have to wait? And how much real pain of small business failures, farm foreclosures, factory shutdowns, and loss of jobs do we have to endure?

*. . . the public is positive on business "improving modern tools, machinery, and plants to make the U. S. superior in technology and know-how again."*

So don't blame the poor put-upon public too much when they give business low marks on

your mainstream job of restoring the health of the economy. I'll tick off a few items from a recent Business Week/Harris Poll. By 60–33 percent, they give you negative marks on borrowing the capital needed for investment to provide more jobs and to make the economy healthy. (I'm sure you are saying, At these interest rates?) By 70–26 percent, they register another set of negative marks on plowing back profits to make the economy grow. (Again, you say, What profits?) By 71–26 percent they are negative on providing steady employment during a period of recession. (But, you say, How do you keep the costs cut to the bone, when slumping demand dictates that only 70 percent of plant capacity can be utilized?) By 58–34 percent they don't see business changing from being interested in short-term profits to being interested in long-term growth. (Ah, insidious Japanese propoganda creeping in here.)

But out of a dozen or more items I could tick off, only *one* emerges on which faith still burns: By 52–43 percent, they are [the public is] *positive* on business in "improving modern tools, machinery, and plants to make the U.S. superior in technology and know-how again." Now, as both North Carolina's great basketball coaches Dean Smith and Von Clausewitz always said, "The only way to win in sports or war is to capitalize on your strengths; use them as the base to build on."

*The business of the Forum meeting here, science and technology, may well be the single most important key to the restoration of confidence in this country.*

You see, the broad mass of the American public gives business relatively good marks in the area of science and technology. But even those sands may be running out. By 67–28 percent,

they rate business low on "making U.S. companies more competitive with companies in Japan and other countries."

So the business of the Forum meeting here, science and technology, may well be the single most important key to the restoration of confidence in this country. But, as your academic colleagues are bound to impress on you, this achievement is not a matter of putting out the soothing syrup to calm the populace. Instead, it must be nothing less than putting America's scientific and technological house in order—and sooner, not later.

Let me add a caveat for those of you in the academic world, lest you think I have unloaded on only our business friends here. Indisputably, you and the country face a terrible, even frightening science crisis. But I also think that *you* face what I call a real-world, or mainstream, crisis as well. I have been singularly struck in recent times—as have many others, including my friend Derek Bok just last week—by how little the academic world has contributed lately to the mainstream of leadership in this country. By the same token, academe has increasingly, almost totally been making it as small businessmen. In fact, the entrepreneurial spirit has inundated college campuses. It seems at times to be taking over as the main business of faculty members. You must ask yourselves—for only you can answer—what has happened to dedicated academic interest in basic research? And, once they are earning their living from outside consulting, will you really get them back on the academic farm, if and when the financial flood comes rolling in from government and business, to produce all those great scientists and engineers?

I would like now to report to you on a small survey we finished this week among a cross section of the American people. It is on the subject of science and technology and the role of universities and business in the process. First, let me say that the public is suffering from what I call

"Japan Shock"—at an accelerated rate. Roughly a year ago, by 59–37 percent, a clear majority felt that, on technology and industrial know-how, the Japanese were equal to or superior to the United States. Now, a much higher 70–25 percent majority feels the same way. The feeling abounds

*. . . there are signs that people are viewing science as a more positive force than ever before.*

among the populace that American superiority in science and technology has been eroding at a rapid rate. And, it is well to recall that this is a country where we have enjoyed limitless confidence in our capacity to lead the rest of the world in know-how.

In addition, there are signs that people are viewing science as a more positive force than ever before. Back in 1977, by 56–38 percent, a majority expressed worry that "the trouble with scientific research is that its results can be applied in ways that cause more bad than good for the world." Now, five years later, a 53–41 percent majority denies that charge—a complete turnaround. But, how long that window of positive feeling about scientific research will remain open is a real question. For, by 63–33 percent, a sizable majority of the same people also is concerned that "with the development of nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons, science might end up destroying the human race." At root, the current surge of the nuclear freeze movement is to achieve the ultimate banning of all nuclear weapons, now favored by a 70–25 percent majority of the people. The seemingly exclusive application of science to weapons of destruction could quickly give science a bad name with the American people.

*. . . a majority is convinced that "even if it brings no immediate benefits, scientific research, which advances the frontiers of knowledge, is a necessary human endeavor worth supporting."*

Our survey also has turned up yet another positive attitude toward science in the overwhelming acceptance people give to basic research. For example, by 57–32 percent, a majority is convinced that "even if it brings no immediate benefits, scientific research, which advances the frontiers of knowledge, is a necessary human endeavor worth supporting." By 91–6 percent, nearly everyone agrees with the claim that "it is important to spend money on scientific research because there is always a chance it could lead to benefits for humanity." And by 84–14 percent, another big majority rejects the view that "most of the great discoveries in science have already been made and we can't expect many more in the future."

*. . . 76 percent of the American people think the space shuttle launches are a major breakthrough for U. S. technology and know-how . . . a majority feels it is worth spending "several billion dollars of federal money to develop the potential for the space shuttle over the next ten years."*

Specifically on science and technology, which you are convened here to discuss, by 63–33

percent, a clear majority agrees that "the federal government should increase by a sizable amount the money it gives to colleges and universities for basic scientific research." Believe me, we are notably not in a period when people want to increase the size of very many governmental programs. On that count, let me say that scientific and technological development appears to be something of a sacred cow on spending. In an area not far from Robert Anderson and Rockwell International's heart is the fact that 76 percent of the American people think the space shuttle launches are a major breakthrough for U. S. technology and know-how, and by 63–33 percent, a majority feels it is worth spending "several billion dollars of federal money to develop the potential for the space shuttle over the next ten years."

Of course, as much as people would like to see government funding for science increase, an even higher 76–19 percent favor "major U. S. corporations increasing by a sizable amount the money they give to colleges and universities for basic scientific research." And by 73–20 percent, a clear majority wants to see "the number of young men and women who are studying science in the universities increased greatly."

*A plurality of the public . . . agreed . . . that "our colleges and universities have fallen far behind in their ability to conduct basic scientific research and to properly train young scientists and engineers."*

As for the scientific reputation of universities, when we asked which had the most creative atmosphere for scientific research, only 12 percent said the federal government, no more than 22 percent said industry, 27 percent men-

tioned foundations, but a much higher 41 percent singled out universities. Finally, by a much closer 47-40 percent, a plurality of the public just this past week told us that they agreed with the claim that "our colleges and universities have fallen far behind in their ability to conduct basic scientific research and to properly train young scientists and engineers."

*There is no doubt that a poor job has been done in arousing and awakening the American people, let alone the Congress, to the urgency of restoring the basic teaching and research capability in science and engineering on our campuses.*

These last two results trouble me. They mean that, to most Americans, there is a deep and abiding sense that universities are all set up and raring to go in basic research and all-out teaching if they can get some funding. Less than a majority are really acquainted with the crisis in science and technology that is now widely acknowledged to exist in the academic world. There is no doubt that a poor job has been done in arousing and awakening the American people, let alone the Congress, to the urgency of restoring the basic teaching and research capability in science and engineering on our campuses. Ironically, people are more willing to go along with the solution—more government and business funding—if, indeed, that is the solution, than in acknowledging the root condition that has brought about that need. Therein lies a potential vulnerability for the cause of enhancing university scientific capabilities in the days ahead.

But the key, I suggest, is not public acclaim or even a public mandate to support what

you want in the science and technology area, though such backing helps. Instead, the key is far more the willingness of Forum members and your counterparts in other corporations and universities to bite the bullet of leadership in this cause and to see it through to completion at all levels in the public and private sectors, where solutions must be found.

Thus, to close the loop from where I started, it turns out to be a stroke of good fortune for both the academic and business communities that Forum members have come together for this gathering to focus on the issues in science and technology which you have set. For business, to put it bluntly, you still have some credibility left in your know-how in science and technology, and by getting heavily involved in upgrading universities' capacity to teach and conduct basic research, you can enhance your general credibility. For universities, you can begin to overcome some of the widespread criticism that you are busy on everything but top-level contributions to the mainstream of life in America, and you can do so by building a major bridge to reality in reconstructing your actual capacity in these areas and improving the perception of what you can do.

Indeed, this meeting is nothing less than an historic moment of convergence of the self-interest of the basic parties who have gathered here for this dialogue. I need not tell you that such moments can be fleeting and more often than not are lost in the quickly changing focus of the times we live in. So I say to you today, in the words of Archibald MacLeish who inspired me as a young man when I was here on this Chapel Hill campus, when he wrote, "America is promises . . . but only promises for those who take them . . . take them now, before it is too late."

*Louis Harris*
*June 25, 1982*

## LOUIS HARRIS

*Louis Harris, one of America's leading analysts of public opinion, is best known for his surveys on public affairs, which are widely syndicated in newspapers across the United States. Over the past twenty-five years, his firm, Louis Harris and Associates, has also conducted more than 5,000 surveys covering marketing, industrial, financial, governmental, and cultural research, as well as a number of major social and psychological studies.*

*Mr. Harris has appeared regularly on television as an analyst of public opinion, as well as writing the Harris Survey, which was initiated in 1963. This year, a new feature, the Business Week/ Harris Poll, is appearing regularly in that magazine.*

*In 1980, the Harris firm was the only national poll to predict a victory for Ronald Reagan and the only organization to predict a Reagan electoral vote majority. In both 1976 and 1972, the Harris firm's forecast of presidential elections were the closest of any national poll.*

*For the U. S. Congress, the Harris organization conducted surveys, in 1976 and 1973 respectively, for the House Commission of Administrative Review and for the Senate —in each instance the first such studies authorized by the House and the Senate.*

*In the early 1960s, Mr. Harris conducted surveys for Newsweek magazine, including those on what blacks and whites were thinking, surveys that are viewed as landmarks in the field of race relations and have been used as bench marks for other racial studies.*

*At Columbia University, Mr. Harris was a faculty associate for ten years, and is one of the original members of the Advisory Board of the Yale University School of Organization and Management. He also holds a nonsalaried appointment on the political science faculty of the University of North Carolina, from which institution he received in 1976 the Distinguished Alumni Award. For the past five years he has been chairman of the board of the American Council for the Arts.*